

Managing chemical risks in a 21st century company

Everyone knows REACH compliance is a monumental task. Much has been said about how the regulation will affect industry, how it is hard to interpret its requirements, how it will re-align supply chains and how much it will cost. Conferences have been organised, academic papers written and the heated debate continues. But what happens when REACH becomes routine, asks Tim Jessel?

Sometime soon the substance information exchange fora (SIEFs) will finalise their agreements, industry groups will agree their approaches and legal precedent will be set. What then? REACH and other product-related environment, health and safety (EH&S) legislation, like the EU Directives on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), the associated restriction of hazardous substances Directive (RoHS), the classification, labelling and packaging (CLP) Regulation and others, will just become “the way we do things round here”. Indeed for a growing number of businesses this is already the case.

Survival

In these days of intense competition, not to mention struggling economics, it is only the leanest and most innovative businesses that will survive and prosper. And the way we deal with our regulatory requirements will be no different. In fact, as they impact every business function, having good regulatory governance, backed up by efficient, innovative compliance management processes and systems, will be essential to future competitiveness. In our rush to meet deadlines it is only natural to focus on the end result rather than the means. And what we end up with might do the job, but almost certainly not in the most efficient and effective way – that’s only to be expected. So let us take a closer look.

Regulatory compliance needs to be seen in the context of an overall business strategy, not just something we give EH&S people deal to while leaving the rest of the business to carry on. It is how we embed regulatory compliance as part of an overall

business strategy, linking this with process thinking and the supporting IT infrastructure that interests me – I hope it will interest you too.

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Welcome to my column! On a monthly basis and with your help, I’ll be examining ways we can apply the already well developed business process optimisation tools and techniques to REACH and other product compliance legislation. There will be a bit of IT thrown in for good measure too – this is the 21st century after all. I hope that you’ll get involved and share your

views, thinking and best practices you’ve developed, and I look forward to receiving your comments on what I have written too.

So what am I going to cover? In my next article I will look at the high-level business issues. I am going to look at how the slew of new product compliance regulations changes the game at the strategic level and the knock-on effect on the EH&S specialist. Roles are changing. We finally get the chance to emerge from behind the piles of regulatory text and have a real input into business strategy, placing us at centre stage.

Future proofing systems

In future articles I will cover how we can develop “future proof” systems that will allow us to secure our research and development pipeline and safeguard us from damage to our reputation from tomorrow’s more demanding regulatory requirements; how to actually go about embedding regulatory compliance into your strategic plan, and what we mean by “regulatory compliance governance”. In each article I will also look at the IT tools that can help and what kinds of help you can expect from the consulting profession.

So how does that grab you? I hope you will come along with me on this journey of discovery, debate the issues and share your views. So, watch this space and read my monthly column. Speaking of which – what are your views? What interests you and do you agree with my thinking? I look forward to hearing from you!

Do please send in your comments to
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The Business Analyst



Come and see me on 29 and 30 March at Chemicals Forum Europe 2010. Chemical Watch, Trasys, ERM, REACHReady, the UIC, essenscia and Field Fisher Waterhouse are partnering to organise the event see:

www.chemicalsforumeurope.org

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